The defensive position of his foes was virtually impregnable, but they could not unite for attack as swiftly or advantageously as he. His own defensive position was less strong, because he had for some distance about and behind him a hostile country. What the allies, therefore, needed was time; what Napoleon wanted was a battle.

But where and how? There would be little advantage and much danger in simply attacking the foe to drive them farther back into their own lands. The battle must be swift and conclusive, or else the year, with all the prestige of Ulm, would be lost. In this juncture what Napoleon chose to call his fate or destiny signally favored him; in reality it was his own calm assurance which misled his opponents. The Austrians had too often felt the weight of Napoleon's hand, and all their officers except Colonel Weirother, a favorite of Alexander's, were cautious; the Russians, recalling that Napoleon had never fought with them, were eager to destroy his renown. Czartoryski, though he had resigned his post of foreign minister, was again at Alexander's side. "Our true policy — and this I told to every one who would listen," he wrote, in 1806, "was to wear out the foe with skirmishes and keep the main army out of reach, secure Hungary, and unite with the Archduke Charles." But the Czar's other advisers were the more intent because there was no love lost between them and Austria. Francis had already despatched two able agents, Gyulai and Stadion, to cooperate with the Prussian envoy Haugwitz in negotiating with Napoleon for peace. These negotiations, if successful, would greatly diminish Russia's importance. Moved, therefore, by a characteristic pride, Alexander barkened to those who clamored for battle, and, taking the momentous decision on his own